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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: GOVERNMENT EXPEDITES EXTRADITION CASE

REF: A. LAGOS 887
1B. STATE 69699

1.(SBU) A High Court judge on May 20 ruled in the Government's favor on the extradition case of Gabriel Umoh, a Nigerian national convicted by a U.S. court of financial fraud. According to the Ministry of Justice prosecutor, the defense attorney argued before the court that the offense allegedly committed by Mr. Umoh is not an offense covered in the Extradition Treaty with the U.S. Not persuaded by this argument, the judge ruled that Umoh should be extradited.

2.(SBU) Umoh's attorney has 15 days to appeal the ruling to the Appellate Court. The MOJ prosecutor is certain that Umoh will appeal, and predicts this will take two-three months if the judge is efficient and does not entertain repeated defense motions for postponement or shift in court venue.

3.(SBU) Comment: The otherwise sluggish Nigerian judicial system has showed remarkable pace in moving Umoh's extradition case in just four weeks; arguments closed on May 13. Nigeria's new Attorney General has told Ambassador Jeter that he considers extradition of fugitives from Nigeria back to the U.S. a priority. It appears he helped select the court and may have lobbied the Chief Judge of the High Court for an honest and efficient judge to preside over this case. The challenge will be to ensure that similar efficiency and integrity continues in the Appellate Court.

JETER